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SIK

Global Knowledge Report

Students for International Knowledge

Message from the President of SIK

Welcome to the new year! SIK is proud and excited to issue our third edition of the *Global Knowledge Report* (GKR). We're now printing once a quarter and will also be accepting faculty and staff submissions in the future. Earlier this year we hosted the Fall \$500, which saw over 150 people attend to soak up knowledge on the 2006 Lebanon War. 10 lucky attendees also walked away with a \$50 gas card, while one able-minded person won a \$100 cash prize for his success in the games. We have a lot more excitement coming your way, so stay tuned as we keep the coverage going in the pursuit of knowledge through education.

- Andre Castillo, President of Students for International Knowledge



SIK at the Fall \$500, SIK's 1st Innaugural. Also in the picture is Dr. Michael Provence of UC San Diego, who spoke on the Lebanon War



SIK was founded in 2006 by a group of students from Cal State San Bernardino to educate students, faculty and staff about international news and events not readily available to the CSUSB campus.

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Questions, Comments, Concerns, Suggestions? Contact SIK. Donations Welcomed.

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Understanding Religious Terrorism: Hamas

By Andre Castillo



Hamas supporters celebrate election victory earlier this year. In a strange twist of fate, the US and the E.U are now leading a boycott against Hamas and the Palestinian government after Hamas was encouraged to run in the Palestinian national elections.
(al-REUTERS/Ahmed Jadallah)Jadallah)

"Hamas has been an organization that revolves around social services and religious education."



A map of Israel-Palestine, the former in burgundy and the latter in orange (excluding the top right, which is officially part of Syria).
(Universidad Carlos III de Madrid,
<http://www.uc3m.es/>)

In the last issue of the GKR I wrote of a terrorist organization by the name of the Jewish Defense League. Here I will discuss their ideological counterpart, the Palestinian-Muslim organization Hamas. As the current majority party-elect in the Palestinian legislature within the greater Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas has in the span of a few months exponentially gained in international importance. As a result, it's important to know the organization's history, it's operations, and it's future objectives to gain a better understanding of current events in Israel/Palestine.

The word "Hamas" itself means "zeal" and is an acronym for "Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya," or The Islamic Resistance Movement. Hamas is a fringe-right wing organization born out of the Palestinian struggle for independence, officially forming in 1987. Hamas' origins can be traced back to the Egyptian social welfare and religious education organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1923 by Hassan al-Bana. The founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, was a member of the Brotherhood in the 1960s and 70s and served as a social worker and head of al-Mujamma' al-Islami (the Islamic Center) under the umbrella of the Muslim Brotherhood's wing in the Gaza Strip of Palestine. At this point both the Brotherhood and Yasin were non-violent in nature and more interested in direct social work for the poor and the needy than in political violence.

Seeing a weakened Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) after their expulsion from Lebanon in 1982 and an increasingly brutal Israeli military occupation, Yasin gradually began to turn towards violence and began stockpiling arms in 1983. By 1986 Yasin had formed an internal security apparatus within the Islamic Center—the Munazzamat al-jihad wal-da'wa (the Organization of Jihad and Da'wa)—which committed acts of arson, kidnapping, and executed

Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel.

Dating back to its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas has been an organization that revolves around social services and religious education. Hamas helps fund schools, sports, hospitals, and provides general welfare benefits for impoverished Palestinians, primarily in the Gaza Strip. Conversely, Hamas has also been an extreme proponent of violence against Israel, its citizens, and its collaborators through the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigade, the military wing of Hamas. Since its inception in 1987 Hamas' violence against Israel has totaled 555 attacks, 2,905 injuries, and 603 fatalities. 84% of those attacks have been directed at Israeli civilians and property. Less than 2% of Hamas' 555 attacks have been directed at the Israeli government or military. Hamas is perhaps best known for its spectacular bombings within Israel proper, most notably a number of suicide bus bombings beginning in 1995, each of which killed dozens of Israeli civilians and wounded dozens more. Another tactic of Hamas involves firing crude Qassam rockets aimed at Israeli schools, streets, and neighborhoods fired from within the Gaza Strip, which terrorize local Israeli communities but cause only minor damage.

With their victory in the January 2006 Palestinian national elections, Hamas has now officially displaced Fatah as the dominant force in Palestinian politics. Hamas also agreed to a ceasefire with Israel and the Palestinian Authority in 2005. This has created an enormous tension between Hamas, Israel, the United States, and the European Union, however, as Hamas lists its objects in its charter as:

The fighting against the false [Zionism and the State of Israel], defeating it and vanquishing it so that justice could prevail, homelands be retrieved and from its mosques

would the voice of the mu'azen emerge declaring the establishment of the state of Islam.

Furthermore, it states that Hamas rejects all “initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences” and argues that “there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad” by Hamas’ definition, which is one of armed struggle (“jihad” in English translates to “struggle” and not “holy war” as is often stated). Hamas’ mission is to liberate all of the land historically known as Palestine through violent resistance to Israel, including Israel’s destruction, as Hamas considers it sacred land under Islam.

However, within the past three years, Hamas has conceded that it would be willing to accept an independent Palestinian state within pre-1967 borders with a return of Palestinian refugees. Ismail Haniya, the current Prime Minister of the PA and leader of Hamas, further stated that he would also recognize Israel and accept a 99-year ceasefire if these conditions were met shortly after the funding was stopped by the European Union (EU) and the United States. As a Hamas mayor in Gaza stated in early 2005, “if the Israelis withdraw, why do we need the resistance?” Hamas has backtracked recently, however, stating that it “was not favorable to the two-state solution because that would entail recognition of Israel”. Clearly these concessions are at odds with their charter, but it seems Hamas has not ruled out a political solution just yet. This is in large part due to tremendous pressure on the part of the United States, Israel, and the EU, and the current crisis facing the Palestinians.

Since June of this year, when Hamas kidnapped an Israeli soldier near the Gaza Strip, Gaza has been under siege by the Israeli military. The United Nations Human Rights Council has called the siege a “savage response.” The only power plant in Gaza (which supplied 43% of Gaza’s daily electricity)

has been destroyed, as well as the main water pipelines and sewerage networks, government offices, educational institutions, bridges, roads, and large parts of Gaza International Airport. In addition, Israel has closed Gaza’s primary international crossing (Rafah, bordering Egypt), prevented Palestinian fishing, and killed 184 Palestinians (over half civilian, including 42 children) while seriously injuring 720. One Israeli soldier has been killed and 25 injured. The Israeli military has also practiced collective punishment against the civilian population, including massive shelling and F-16 generated sonic booms. As a result, poverty in Gaza has reached 75% of the population. Israel also recently kidnapped 8 Hamas Cabinet ministers and 26 members of the Palestinian legislative council in Ramallah in the West Bank, though some have since been released. The Palestinian Authority, dependent on foreign aid to survive, has been denied funding from the US and the EU while Israel has also refused to deliver hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes it has collected from Palestinians on behalf of the PA. As a result, the United Nations has labeled the situation in Gaza and the West Bank a humanitarian crisis. In the meantime, Hamas forces are clashing with Fatah forces in the Gaza Strip and have led to many deaths on both sides. The situation is untenable; Palestinian society is on the verge of collapse.

Though Hamas initially showed changes toward moderation, it remains to be seen whether the current boycott by the US, the EU, and Israel will encourage Hamas to moderate its stance vis-à-vis Israel, or if it will have the opposite effect and weaken its more moderate leadership and shift it back into the hands of radicals, not unlike what happened with the US-led diplomatic boycott of Yasir Arafat and the secular Fatah just a few years ago. With the formation of a Hamas-Fatah unity government about to emerge, a renewal of the peace process may be on the horizon.



Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniya represents the pragmatic wing of Hamas and is sometimes in conflict with the more radical Khaled Meshaal, a Hamas leader currently exiled in Syria. Haniya has recently promised to step down as PM in favor of Muhammad Shbeir to end the boycott against the PA (BBC News, Jerusalem)

“It remains to be seen whether the current boycott by the US, the EU, and Israel will encourage Hamas to moderate its stance vis-à-vis Israel, or if it will have the opposite effect and weaken its more moderate leadership.”

About Buddhism

Bv Brandon Frvman

"Buddha is not considered a god, he is the man that found the path to enlightenment."



The traditional Lotus Mantra pose by Buddha is practiced by many to achieve a peaceful mind. (www.questliving.com)

"Other smaller sects of this religion usually incorporate their own previous religion to form a new type of Buddhist thought, for example the Japanese merged Buddhism with Shinto ideals."

When you hear of the religion of Buddhism, what do you think? Did you know that there are many types of Buddhist denominations practiced around the globe, just like the different forms of Christianity? Buddhism is known as the fourth largest religion in the world with roughly five hundred million followers. However, most would not consider Buddhism a traditional religion, rather a belief system that is defined by moral codes and personal convictions.

The oldest, most traditional form of Buddhism is that of the Theravada school of thought, which is mainly practiced in Thailand and Sri Lanka. Buddhism stems from the Hindu religion because the founder, Buddha, was raised as a Hindu. As a Hindu, Buddha believed in karma, reincarnation, Samsara, the Four-Caste system, animal sacrifices, and polytheism. Karma is the sum of all that an individual has done, is currently doing and will do. Reincarnation holds the notion that some essential part of a living being can be reborn in a new body, and Samsara is known as the perpetual, never-ending cycle of being reincarnated. The four-caste system of India is the traditional hereditary system of social stratification of India, in which social classes are defined into four hierarchical endogamous groups.

When contemplating life and his beliefs, Buddha felt depressed and became an ascetic. He found a way to end Samsara and reach Nirvana or "enlightenment." Nirvana is an enduring, transcendental happiness, or state characterized by freedom from or oblivion to pain, worry, and the external world. Buddha wandered India, teaching his enlightenment around 560 B.C.E. Buddha no longer believed in many gods nor in there being a high spiritual being at all, and did away with animal karma, reincarnation, and Samsara. However, he introduced a way to end Samsara

which is through Nirvana. Buddha is not considered a god, he is the man that found the path to Enlightenment. He created the doctrines of Buddhism, which are The Four Noble Truths (the causes of suffering), The Eightfold Path (the solution to suffering), and The Five Precepts, which are for the laity to follow.

As Buddha is said to have taught The Five Precepts out of compassion, rather than a desire to control his followers, they are to be undertaken voluntarily rather than as commandments from a god. They are as follows: 1) the precept to refrain from taking the life (killing) of living beings; 2) the precept to refrain from stealing; 3) the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct (adultery, rape, etc.); 4) the precept to refrain from false speech (lying); 5) the precept to refrain from intoxicants which lead to heedlessness.

All other types of Buddhist sects stem from the Mahayana school of thought, which comprises the more liberal teachings of Buddha, all of which have added the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra introduces bodhisattvas, which are other monks who have reached Nirvana or almost reached Nirvana and stopped before they actually reached, to help others reach Nirvana. Mahayana Buddhists look up to these bodhisattvas as helpers, one can pray for their help, intervention, and guidance, amongst other things. Other smaller sects of this religion usually incorporate their own previous religion to form a new type of Buddhist thought, for example the Japanese merged Buddhism with Shinto ideals.

In Theravada Buddhism, mandatory services are not held like in many other religions. They do not have what some would term a preacher who preaches to the people who come for the services. Temples are places where people can come to meditate, or to make offerings to the monks. The temples are more

like a community for people who want to practice meditation or have a place to go to get in touch with Buddhism. Every week, the laity (followers) and the monks get together and have a potluck for the monks, which is a form of good karma on behalf of the laity.

Buddhism is practiced in many temples throughout the United States. One of the more traditional local temples is the Buddhist Temple of America, in Ontario California. When attending an evening chanting service at the temple in which monks hold every night of the week at 6 p.m., one must take off their socks and shoes, as it is a custom. Services last about an hour and half, which includes a half an hour of traditional chanting in the Pali language (an old language of Sri Lanka), followed by an hour of silent meditation. They have pamphlets inside the temple that will have the English translation of what is being chanted.

As a famous saying of Buddha's goes, Buddhist doctrine "makes no distinction between high and low, rich and poor; it is like the sky, it has room for all; like water it washes all alike," and anyone is welcome to practice the teachings of any age, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. To visit the local temple: The Buddhist Temple of America 5615 Howard St., Ontario, CA 91762, Phone (909) 988-7731.

From Bangladesh to California

By Mohammad Shamsuzzaman

As a child, all I knew about America was that it was the utopia of the world where dreams find their destination. However, my first visual exposure to America came through the Cable News Network (CNN) in 1991 when the government of Bangladesh officially started to telecast the channel. What I knew about America and what I watched on TV were not at all alike. I started to unlearn the fact that it is an affluent country where everyone can mint his or her own fortune. Rather, having had the exposure to some of the traits of American culture, I realized that that it

is, in fact, a springboard of knowledge. I then formed a conviction that I would go to America for my intellectual enrichment. I completed my M.A. from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh in English Literature in 2000. I proceeded to pursue my goal but because of the changing political scenario due to 9/11, nothing went in my favor. After a while, I eventually reached California on the 12th of September, 2005.

The other reason for coming to California was a physical obligation. I am one of those people who are vulnerable to the increased air pollution of the city of Dhaka. I became a victim of chronic headache, my blood pressure used to creep up abnormally, and my insomnia intensified. My situation worsened when I contracted a peculiar nasal disease. It is peculiar in the sense that there are few victims of this disease found in America or Europe. The vast majority of the victims reside either in Asia or in Africa. I had to undergo nasal surgery four times but could not get rid of the disease. According to the doctor, I must live in a country where air pollution is relatively low or non-existent, so I chose California. Though San Bernardino's air is not the greatest, compared to Dhaka's, it is heaven!

Strangely enough, California did not welcome me warmly. Literally, my site of salvation became a place of sobs and sniffles. As I went to the Social Security Administration to apply for my Social Security Number, I was informed that my last name was misspelt in the immigration record and was advised to go to Los Angeles. I was too new of a person to find any place in San Bernardino, let alone in Los Angeles. But eventually, I went on the 18th of November. When I returned to my dorm, I discovered to my dismay that my flash drive containing my entire first semester files was lost. Confounded, I cried. On the 19th of November, I got hit by a car while crossing a road and did not cry at all. I just wondered why the paradise of many had become a "pinjrapole" (A place where animals languish to death) for me.

Am I romanticizing my sorrows? Yes,



The Byodo-in Temple in Oahu Island Hawaii. (OT Lounge)



Mohammad Shamsuzzaman, or Zaman for short, is a Masters student at CSUSB in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

"As a child, all I knew about America was that it was the utopia of the world where dreams find their destination."



Bangladesh has a population of more than 147 million people. (CNN.com)

certainly. I never before faced life alone and isolated. In Bangladesh my life was rather easy and enjoyable since my family members used to help me in all my affairs. Having arrived here, I found myself in a completely different situation in which I did not have an iota of firsthand experience. This is why I was unable to cope. I started to lose my composure. But gradually I learned to collect myself and thought, after earning A's in all my courses, had I not been here, I would not have known this flipside version of life.

Because of my seven-month stay in California, I have experienced an epiphany—in life, nothing is granted. Life changes as does our destiny. Observing the people here, I have come

to the conclusion that with hard work and perseverance anyone can win over any crisis. I perceive that because of the untoward situation I have gone through, my resilience has become stronger.

A culture diametrically different from mine is not something I should continue to complain about. The scenic beauty of California, its soothing weather, and cooperative people are becoming familiar and friendly to me. I miss my culture, my country, but I am no longer a victim of culture shock. Because I know adjustment is the key, I am trying to adjust to the culture and climate of California. This place is gradually becoming a part of my inner entity. California is no longer caustic to me; instead it is captivating.

North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions

By Joel Herrera

"The current leader, Kim Jung Il maintains a centralized and highly authoritative communist government replete with human rights violations."

North Korea, located between Japan and China, remains isolated from the international community, and, as 20th century history has shown, has maintained a stubborn and aged economy that is fighting desperately to remain autonomous while projecting an uncompromising and intensifying military image. The current leader, Kim Jung Il, maintains a centralized and highly authoritative communist government replete with human rights violations. The country is sealed shut from the international community.

instant response from the UN, which then passed Security Council Resolution 1718, which forces North Korea to give up all nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles while requiring that all cargo going in and out of the country be inspected. The resolution's actual application and level of severity depends on China's success, or desire, in deterring North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

China, North Korea's main ally, was warned only twenty minutes in advance of North Korea's October 9th nuclear test and disseminated the information to Washington and Japan soon after.

Current events have intensified speculation, once again, that North Korea is in the prospects of developing a nuclear weapon. The world witnessed the testing of two long-range missiles in July 2006. On October 9th, it was reported that a successful nuclear blast took place, bringing us to the current debate over sanctions in the United Nations Security Council. Stringent economic and military sanctions could be imposed on North Korea with China, North Korea's only significant, powerful ally, serving as a diplomatic haven for six party talks and a possible nuclear deterrent. The blast sparked an instant

Back in 1994, the North Korean nuclear crisis took a surprising turn when it refused to let the International Atomic Energy Agency inspect certain areas suspected of producing weapons-grade plutonium. The widely known Agreed Framework was then established with the US and North Korea proclaiming that if North Korea halts its nuclear program, the United States would provide heavy fuel oil and two light-water reactors. The contract brought North Korea back to the negotiating table but did not see much success in the proceeding decade. The framework abruptly ended in 2002 when the United States accused North Korea of defying the contract by restarting its nuclear program. However, a study conducted

By the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* found that the allegations in October 2002 were misleading, if not outright false, because the “North Korean electricity grid is far too small and simple to run such a large and potentially hazardous [unit].” The journal also noted that the shipments of heavy fuel oil to North Korea by the United States “contained significant amounts of sulfur and other impurities that accelerated the corrosion of North Korea’s heat exchangers [which were designed] to use coal,” significantly reducing the heat exchanger’s efficiency. However, intelligence on North Korea is spotty, at best. And as Foreign Affairs writer Selig S. Harrison writes, “[t]he [Bush] administration’s underlying mistake—in the case of the North Korean uranium mystery, as in Iraq—has been treating a worst-case scenario as revealed truth.”

As the US debates the North Korean nuclear crisis, very few news outlets have given a significant historical context. The current situation stems back to the Korean War of the 1950s when the United States military fought the Soviet backed North Korean military and China from invading the south. This started a scathing anti-American propaganda campaign within North Korea, which still lives vividly in the state-controlled media. The North Korean news outlet KCNA Pyongyang claims the US was complicit in war crimes against the North Korean people, stating that “[t]he US imperialists spread various species of germs in at least 400 places in the northern part of Korea on 700 occasions in two months from 28 January to 31 March in 1952. They massively dropped napalms and poison-gas bombs.” In addition, KCNA says, “According to AP from Washington on 17 May 1951, [the United States] conducted more than 3,000 experiments against [prisoners of war] in the waters off Koje Island.” These assertions, according to various human rights organizations, have some veracity and remain a major part of North Korea’s history as the state-run media keeps these images in the forefront.

So the US is dealing with more than just another potential nuclear rouge state—but an entire mass of people indoctrinated with selective history promulgated through a propaganda campaign. Consider, in addition, that the US president in 2002 called North Korea a part of an “axis of evil,” which also encapsulates another country currently under US occupation. Further consider that current US foreign policy has streamlined military aggression through “anticipatory self-defense” (preemptive war) as defined by the US National Security Strategy of 2002. It is not hard to imagine that a country in North Korea’s economic condition sought to obtain nuclear weapons to increase its own leverage militarily and economically while responding to the nuclear arsenal of the world’s only superpower. As Hans Blix, the former head United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq, stated on C-SPAN shortly after the October 9th nuclear test, “if a country perceives that its security is guaranteed, it won’t need to consider weapons of mass destruction. This security guarantee is the first line of defense against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”

China is seen as possessing the critical diplomatic leverage with North Korea because of its role as the principal supplier of food and aid to the country. Unlike North Korea, China has opened its markets to countries around the world. For example, China became a member of the World Trade Organization in 1995. North Korea has remained isolated and without any type of economic reform since the fall of the Soviet Union, which was a key economic supporter to North Korea. China, in the last decade, has been offering a great deal of food and aid to the impoverished North Koreans and remains a key economic partner, supplying 32.9 percent of North Korea’s imports and home to 45.6 percent of its exports. Other than China, North Korea’s list of allies runs thin, which helped precipitate a severe famine from 1995-96 when an estimated two million North Koreans died of hunger.



In 1950, North Korea invaded the South, sparking the Korean War that eventually saw 17 countries, including the US and China, battle to a stalemate at the division of the 38th parallel. The campaign helped lead to the defeat of President Harry Truman in the 1952 Democratic primaries. (CBC News, cbc.ca)



Kim Jong-il, North Korea’s president and son of Kim Il Sung, has been in power since 1997. The now-deceased Kim Il Sung was the founder of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea’s formal title)

(The Associated Press)



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list of upcoming events visit
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SIK on TV! With Alternate Focus

Middle East Documentaries on
San Bernardino Public Access TV
For show times and listings, see
csusbsik.wordpress.com/siktv

The country's main exports, minerals and various produce, seem just as emaciated; only 16 percent of the land is suitable for agricultural development and most of the production houses, factories, and power generators, once supplied by the Soviet Union, are aging and in need of repair. It is difficult to imagine that a country with such a precarious power grid and with daily rolling blackouts could manage to produce an effective nuclear weapon. The want is certainly there; however, the technology, as Hans Blix has said recently, is five years away.

The situation could quickly escalate if further threats of violence and strangulation through sanctions continue to flood the rhetoric and actions of both countries. China could possibly be the deterrent, but it will not work with the absence of a practical and pragmatic change within US foreign policy that assures a commitment to less violent means that also do not further the country's economic isolation, a result of which could indirectly hurt the Korean people and further the government's ambitions for nuclear weapons.

About SIK

Students for International Knowledge (SIK) is a student group organized to provide education to Cal State San Bernardino and the Inland Empire on international politics, cultures, and history. We do this in four ways: a quarterly newsletter, videos/documentaries, a Coyote Radio show, and events. The 2005-2006 director of the CSUSB Student Union once labeled SIK "the pinnacle of intellectual thought on our campus." To join, just email csusbsik@gmail.com.

The Newsletter Committee

Brandon Fryman (L), Joel Herrera (C), and Andre Castillo (R) put in many hours of work to make this possible. If you have any comments, suggestions, or would like to make a submission, email csusbsik@gmail.com and one of us will be happy to respond. For submissions, please be aware that space is limited and articles are checked and edited thoroughly for quality.



Come to our Discussion Series!

Tuesday nights from 7-8 p.m. in SU-210, SIK invites students and faculty to give presentations on international issues. This quarter SIK has covered Islam and the West, Afro-centrism, the US occupation of Iraq, and Sudanese atrocities in Darfur. Come join us while checking csusbsik.wordpress.com for updates.

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